

## FIRST UNITED STATES RECORD OF *ASCALOBYAS* (NEUROPTERA: ASCALAPHIDAE), A RANGE EXTENSION FROM NORTHEASTERN MEXICO TO TEXAS<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** A female specimen of *Ascalobyas albistigma* (Neuroptera: Ascalaphidae), collected west of Juno in August, 1973 from Val Verde Co., Texas, was discovered in the Midwestern State University (Texas) insect collection. This is the first record of this genus in the United States and extends its known range by approximately 575 miles (925 km.).

While identifying the Neuroptera in the Midwestern State University insect collection, the author discovered a very large and peculiar owlfly in the collection. The specimen was collected west of Juno in Val Verde Co., Texas in August, 1973 by H. L. Horry, graduate biology student. The specimen was probably caught with an aerial net, since the habitat on the collection label read "air".

The Texas specimen was readily assigned to the ascalaphid subfamily Haplogleniinae, since the eyes were entire and not divided by a transverse sulcus. According to the literature, *Ascaloptynx* (or *Neuropteryx*) had previously been the only members of this subfamily known to occur in the United States. The distinguishing feature of this genus in the New World, besides the entire eyes, is the petiolate wings, with forewings having a prominent thumb-like projection on the posterior margin near the base of each wing. Penny (1981) placed *Ascaloptynx* in the tribe Verticillecerini.

Since the specimen in question lacks petiolate wings and the prominent thumb-like projections, it is assigned to the tribe Haplogleniini. Penny (1981) recognized three genera of American Haplogleniini: *Amoea*, *Ascalobyas*, and *Haploglenius*. The Texas specimen was assigned to *Ascalobyas* on the basis of the antennae being shorter than half the length of the forewing, costal field of forewing and apical fourth of all wings being dark brown, and the yellowish-white pterostigmas. Penny (1981) presented *Ascalobyas* as a new genus because the old genus name, *Byas* Rambur, 1842 was preoccupied.

Weele's (1908) monograph with descriptions of the two known species of *Byas* (= *Ascalobyas*) mentions the type species, *microcerus* Rambur, as an eastern and Antillean species and a western species, *albistigma* (Walker). He suggested they could be combined under one species,

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because the terminalia are superficially quite similar, and the extremely small differences are never constant. However, he chose to maintain them as two distinct species due to lack of transitional forms from the intermediate region of the two species' distributions. Measurements of the Texas specimen (Table 1) and color descriptions most nearly coincide with those given by Weele (1908) for the western *albistigma*, which would be logical for a Texas locality.

The northernmost published record for *Ascalobyas albistigma* (Walker), 1853 is San Pedro Sula, Honduras (Weele, 1908). Penny (1981) reported that "*Ascalobyas* is presently known from two species ranging from northern Brazil to Panama," but mapped the distribution of *Ascalobyas* to extend northward to San Pedro Sula, Honduras. The statement, therefore, was probably an error and should have read, "...from northern Brazil to Honduras". This makes the Texas specimen a 1343 mile (2161 km.) range extension from the northernmost published record for the species.

Oliver Flint (pers. comm., 1989), curator of Neuropteroids at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, reports several examples of the species from well into northeastern Mexico in the NMNH collection. The northernmost specimens are from El Salto Falls on the San Luis Potosi-Tamaulipas border near El Naranjo and, previous to the Texas specimen, were considered to represent the northern range extent for the genus. Therefore, the Val Verde record is a northern range extension of *Ascalobyas albistigma* by approximately 575 miles (925 km.) from El Salto Falls in northeastern Mexico to Val Verde Co., Texas, a new record for the United States. The owlfly, damaged in transit to the Smithsonian Institution as a dried specimen to be compared with the Mexican specimens, has been relaxed and is now preserved in alcohol in the Midwestern State University insect collection.

TABLE 1 - Length measurements (in mm.) of body, wings, and antennae of *Ascalobyas* females.

	Total body	Forewing	Hindwing	Abdomen	Antennae	Reference
<i>microcerus</i>	36	44	41	23	21	Weele 1908
<i>albistigma</i>	36-38	42-44	38-43.5	24	19-20	Weele 1908
Texas specimen	38	43	39	26	18	

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## LITERATURE CITED

- Penny, N.D. 1981. Review of the generic level classification of the New World Ascalaphidae (Neuroptera). Acta Amazonica 11 (2):391-406.  
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## SOCIETY MEETING OF APRIL 25, 1990

PATTERNS IN NATURE  
Dr. Richard Weber, Speaker

Dr. Richard Weber, entomologist from the University of Delaware and eminent insect photographer, treated his audience of 21 members and 30 guests to a unique experience. Not only did he show them remarkable pictures of insects but he also regaled them with his world view, quick wit, and playful humor. While many seek to learn and emulate Dick Weber's technical skills, it was evident that technique, though important, was peripheral to the real essence of his photography. Pretty pictures come to life when they tell a story or provoke a question. As Albert Szent-Györgyi said, "See what others have seen, but think what no one has ever thought." Dick Weber's success comes from photographing what he thinks.

It was not possible to be passive in the audience because questions, banter, and repartee were part of the show. "What's going on here? What good are cryptic or aposematic coloration against night predators? Does anyone know the name of this plant? Has anybody seen this? Can you imagine the smell I put up with photographing maggots on that rabbit carcass? Did you ever see a bird dropping that looked like an insect? Look at that, a fly eating a wasp!" These were part of the barrage of illustrated, thought-provoking comments and anecdotes from an evening that was memorable for other reasons as well.

Prior to Dr. Weber's talk, President Roger Fuester presented the annual Calvert Prize to Jennifer Reynolds for her science fair project, "Does the color of light affect the reproduction of *Drosophila melanogaster*?" She and the first and second runners up, Kimberly Wallace and Chaitanya Rao, displayed their insect-related projects. Margot Livingston, the first Calvert Prize recipient in 1987, was present for the ceremony.

In addition to the Calvert Prize, special certificates of appreciation were presented to unsuspecting members of the Society for their great commitment and continuing contributions to the Society. Howard P. Boyd, president from 1977-1981 and editor of *Entomological News* since 1974, described his association with AES as one of the most rewarding and enjoyable activities of his life. Mildred Morgan, office secretary since 1979, also received a certificate of appreciation. She confided that she almost quit after three weeks but that Howard Boyd convinced her to stick it out a "bit longer." Both expressed their heartfelt thanks to the Society for the honor. Jesse Freese, treasurer since 1969, was also honored but was unable to attend the meeting.

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